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FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BERLIN 000811

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/19/2018
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SUBJECT: JUNE 12 MEETING IN BERLIN OF THE WESTERN FRIENDS
OF GEORGIA

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR JEFFREY RATHKE FOR REASON 1
.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The June 12 meeting of the Western Friends of Georgia focused mainly on a German-drafted non-paper, which proposes a three-stage plan for the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, beginning with security and confidence building measures (CBMs), including declarations of non-use of force by both sides. EUR DAS Bryza emphasized that it would not be helpful to get "bogged down" discussing CBMs that neither party particularly cared about in the first phase of the talks. Bryza also suggested making the non-paper less detailed and less prescriptive, noting that the Friends should not dictate to the two parties what they should discuss and in what sequence. German Special Envoy Lucas admitted that SRSR Arnault had similarly criticized the non-paper's top-down approach. Lucas' counterpart at the Chancellery agreed that the non-paper was "a bit heavy" and rigid, but said the MFA had been very stubborn about changing it. In the context of avoiding a Georgian demand for the withdrawal of CIS peacekeepers, Bryza emphasized the importance of offering the Georgians something concrete to challenge the current Russian monopoly on security in Abkhazia, such as an international police presence. However, no one was optimistic about the EU or any other international organization taking up the task. The June 12 meeting was supposed to be followed on June 13 by a full-fledged Friends of Georgia meeting, but the Russians pulled out at the last minute, much to the irritation of Chancellor Merkel, who personally solicited and received a commitment from President Medvedev during his June 5 visit to Berlin to send Russian representatives. END SUMMARY.

Only the Western Friends

12. (C) Germany hosted a Western Friends of Georgia meeting in Berlin June 12. Plans for a full Friends of Georgia meeting on June 13 did not come to pass after the Russians decided to pull out, ostensibly to wait for the results of the June 16 Georgia/Abkhaz meeting in Stockholm. The June 12 Friends of Georgia meeting was chaired by German Special Envoy for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Hans-Dieter Lucas. Also attending on the German side were MFA Office Director for Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus Johannes Regenbrecht, Deputy Office Director Christoph Reztlauff, and UN Security Council desk officer Mirko Schilbach. Attending on behalf of France were Veronique Bujon-Barre and Jay Dharmadhikari and from the UK, Sir Brian Fall and Louise Saville. Representing the U.S. were EUR DAS Matt Bryza and EUR CARC Conflicts Advisor Michael Carpenter.

German Non-Paper

13. (C) Discussion focused mostly on a German MFA non-paper, which outlines a three-staged approach for the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. Hans-Dieter Lucas reviewed the paper, emphasizing his view that it was important to put off the status question until the end of the

process (stage three) and to begin instead with security and confidence building measures, particularly declarations of non-use of force by both sides. While the German paper calls for adapting the format of the CIS peacekeeping mission from "peacekeeping" to "peacemaking," it does not address the critical Georgian concern of Russia's military posture in the region.

¶4. (C) Bryza told Lucas it would not be helpful to get "bogged down" discussing CBMs that neither side particularly cared about in the first phase of the talks, since this is exactly why the UN Friends process had made so little progress during the last few years. He noted that it would make the Georgians nervous if the core issues -- i.e., IDP returns and political settlement -- were put off. Pointing out that the Georgians and Abkhaz are already talking directly with each other on the basis of a March 28 Georgian peace plan (and were concretely discussing a Georgian non-use-of-force pledge in return for an Abkhaz agreement on Georgian IDP returns), Bryza said the Friends should not dictate to the two parties what they should discuss and in what sequence. Bryza argued that having a firm conception of a political settlement that elaborates the future status of Abkhazia and spells out the constitutional guarantees for military, political, economic, and cultural security for the Abkhaz is critical to getting the sides to the table in the first place.

¶5. (C) Lucas said he had shared the paper with UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for Abkhazia, Jean Arnault, who had criticized the paper for its top-down approach, in which the Friends seemed to be dictating a

BERLIN 00000811 002 OF 003

solution to the sides. Lucas in turn criticized Arnault for being in a "pessimistic mood" and for not fully supporting the German plan. He said he would discuss it with him in greater detail during Arnault's trip to Berlin on June 16.

Putting the Permanent Steering Committee on "Steroids"

¶6. (C) The German non-paper calls for the establishment of a permanent steering committee to "restart and to institutionalize a framework for direct political dialogue between the parties." There was agreement that the committee should be composed of representatives from capitals rather than local ambassadors to ensure that it had enough influence to facilitate dialogue. Bryza called for putting the committee on "steroids," and suggested the creation of several working groups to focus on different aspects of the peace settlement: security, political, and economic.

Sharing the Non-Paper

¶7. (C) There was some back-and-forth over how the German non-paper should be shared with the Georgians and Russians. Bryza pushed for at least orally briefing the Georgians on the paper before giving it to the Russians, otherwise it would be "dead on arrival." Lucas countered that if the Russians thought the paper had been coordinated with the Georgians before being shared with them, it would also be DOA. Lucas agreed to have the German Ambassador in Tbilisi, Patricia Flor, brief the Georgians on the non-paper before sharing it with the Russians.

Avoiding a Demand for Withdrawal of CIS Peacekeepers

¶8. (C) There was agreement that the main goal at this point was to avoid a Georgian declaration demanding a withdrawal of the CIS peacekeepers. There was also agreement that the key to keeping the Georgians from issuing such a declaration was to show the Georgians solidarity by protesting the Russian deployment of additional peacekeeping forces and railway

troops as unacceptable. Bryza pressed further steps on this issue, saying a Georgian declaration was inevitable unless the Georgians could be offered something concrete to challenge the current Russian monopoly on security in Abkhazia, such as an international police presence from the UN, EU or some other international organization. The French rep almost completely ruled out an EU police presence, saying this should not even be suggested to the Georgians. In a pre-meeting bilateral, Lucas objected to letting Georgia "blackmail" the Friends into meeting its demands by holding the threat of a declaration over their heads. He seemed more concerned that Russia had not come to the Group of Friends meeting in Berlin, however, than with Russian combat troop deployments to Abkhazia.

Chancellery Views on Abkhazia

¶9. (C) After the Friends of Georgia meeting, Bryza met with both Chancellery Director for Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus Norman Walter and Deputy National Security Advisor Rolf Nikel in succession, emphasizing that President Bush was personally engaged on the Abkhazia issue and that it was one of the top priorities in the U.S. bilateral relationship with Russia. Walter reported that the Georgian ambassador had just been at the Chancellery to get a read-out on the Bush-Merkel discussions at Meseberg. The ambassador had claimed that a Georgian decision on canceling the peacekeeping agreement in Abkhazia had already been taken -- it was only a matter of when, not if, it would be announced. Walter said that Heusgen had called the Georgian FM the day before, pleading that the Georgians not do "anything foolish" and pointing out that the international community was coming up with some ideas on how to address Georgian concerns.

¶10. (C) Bryza emphasized that the Georgians had been very restrained up to now. Two weeks ago, they had offered to issue a non-use-of-force declaration if the Russians agreed to withdraw the paratroopers and to consult with Georgia on implementation of the April 16 Russian presidential instructions on relations with Abkhazia. The Russians had reacted by deploying the railroad troops. Bryza noted that he himself had just been talking to the Georgian FM before the meeting. He noted that she had claimed to be under instructions to make the declaration no later than June 16 and did not leave much hope that this could be delayed. Bryza stressed, as he had during the Friends of Georgia meeting, that it was important to offer the Georgians something concrete to challenge the Russian monopoly on security in Abkhazia, such as an international police force. Walter

BERLIN 00000811 003 OF 003

responded that no one in Europe was on board for an EU mission. Even if there was the political will to deploy such a force, it would take six months to implement. Nikel was equally dismissive of getting any organization to do a police mission in Abkhazia, arguing that what was needed there were peacekeeping forces.

Chancellery Distances Itself from German Non-Paper

¶11. (C) Bryza said that without some kind of concrete gesture, it was unrealistic to expect the Georgians to simply announce the non-use of force, as proposed in the German MFA non-paper. Walter agreed that the paper was "a bit heavy" and that it was perhaps unrealistic to begin with CBMs. Why not begin with some of the elements in phase two (IDPs, economic development, etc.)? Walter noted that he had not seen the German MFA paper himself until two days before and that the MFA was very "stubborn" about changing it. He said that Lucas had reported to him that the paper had been essentially endorsed as is by the Western Friends that morning. Bryza countered that this was, in fact, not the case, reiterating his concerns about the paper being too detailed and not sensitive enough to the fact that this had

to be a Georgia-Abkhaz process and not imposed from the outside. Both agreed that it would be helpful if Bryza called Lucas to reinforce the U.S. points on the paper, without making reference to his conversation with Walter.

Chancellor Unhappy with Russian Absence

¶12. (C) Walter recounted how the Chancellor, during Medvedev's June 5 visit to Berlin, had spent 15 minutes making the case for Russia to participate in the June 12 Friends of Georgia meeting in Berlin. Medvedev had been dubious, but in the end, had agreed to send representatives to a meeting on June 13 "if this is so important to you." Walter said the fact that the Russians had been no-shows really grated the Chancellor. In stark contrast to his MFA counterpart (Lucas), Walter was notably dismissive of the Russians' excuses for not attending.

TIMKEN JR